



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 22, 2009

NOAA Asks Mariners to Safeguard Pacific Data Buoys

NOAA's National Weather Service is asking the marine community to help safeguard its offshore buoys - which provide meteorologists with critical data for weather and tsunami forecasts - following a series of incidents where buoys were damaged or cut from their moorings.

Since November 2008, three weather buoys around the Hawaiian Islands have been damaged, and several tsunami buoys around the Pacific Rim stopped transmitting data after severe weather or commercial ships broke the mooring lines. Two weather buoys suffered serious damage and stopped sending data. A third weather buoy continues to transmit data but has drifted thousands of miles to the west because of a cut mooring line. NOAA and the U.S. Coast Guard have repaired many of the buoys, and the remainder will be serviced as soon as ship schedules permit.

"The damage could put communities at risk from severe weather and has been costly in terms of repairs and lost data," said Jim Weyman, meteorologist-in-charge of the Honolulu Weather Forecast Office and director of the Central Pacific Hurricane Center. "We ask the fishing, shipping and boating communities to help prevent additional losses which are an avoidable expense for taxpayers."

These data buoys are a vital part of the National Weather Service's observation systems, providing wind speed and direction, wave height, pressure changes and other key data about marine conditions. Forecasters combine buoy data with information from satellites, radar and weather balloons to issue storm warnings and high surf advisories.

Mariners can help protect these buoys by:

- Never boarding or tying up to a buoy;
- Never fishing around or under a buoy;
- Giving the buoy a wide berth to avoid entangling the mooring or other equipment suspended from the buoy – 500 yards for vessels which are trailing gear and at least 20 yards for all others

Fishermen and other boaters can also help by reporting any of these activities or the sighting of damaged or drifting buoys to the U.S. Coast Guard at 808-535-3333.

NOAA buoys are easy to identify. All are painted bright colors and imprinted with "NOAA" and the station number. Operated and maintained by NOAA's National Data Buoy Center, the buoys are continually monitored by an automated quality assurance program which immediately notifies technicians when data is lost.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

On the Web:

Hawaii buoys real-time data interactive map: <http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/maps/Hawaii.shtml>

DART (tsunami) buoys real-time data interactive map: <http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/dart.shtml>

Video and still images of U.S. Coast Guard and NOAA working together to install and maintain buoys: <http://www.uscghawaii.com>.
Images of damaged or entangled buoys: <http://www.noaa.gov>.